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ABSTRACT

The Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings Scale (ASPLR), a performance-based instrument, is described. The origins of and rationale behind the Scale are discussed. The construction and use of the Scale are detailed. It is hoped that the usefulness of the ASPLR extends beyond the "on-arrival" English as a second language program for which it was originally designed to other areas involving second language learning. The major contribution of the Scale is seen in the analysis it provides of the development of second language proficiency and in the performanced-based definitions of proficiency levels that permit the practical skills attained by learners to be precisely stated. (Author/JB)

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A PERFORMANCE-BASED APPROACH TO THE MEASUREMENT OF SECOND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

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I. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to introduce to a wider audience the Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings Scale (ASLPR) which is already familiar to those teachers involved in the on-arrival section of the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP). Though the development of the scale is not yet complete, it is presented at this Congress both for the interest of delegates and so that its applicability to a wider context than the AMEP might be considered.

II. ORIGINS

The ASLPR was developed by a Queensland working party[1] for the Joint Commonwealth-States Committee on the Adult Migrant Education Program, a national committee formed in September 1978 by the Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. The initial task of the Joint Committee was the development of an "on-arrival" programme in English as a Second Language for migrants and refugees to Australia. In developing the programme, it was rapidly realized that some clear notion of the path or development of second language proficiency was required to give the programme coherence and to allow the unambiguous statement of goals in terms of the language tasks that the learner will be able to carry out, i.e., in terms of his observable language performance. The ASLPR was developed for this purpose though, as will be observed subsequently, it has other uses as well.

The starting-point in developing the ASLPR was the "Absolute Language Proficiency Ratings" of the (United States) Foreign Service Institute School of Language Studies [1968]. Although some parts of the ASLPR still bear some resemblance to the FSI scale, the changes have been sufficiently great that the two scales must now be considered to be independent.

The FSI Scale was chosen as the starting-point because it is the most widely-accepted and most thoroughly researched performance-based scale available. It has been evaluated against or compared with other

well-established instruments and its validity and reliability and those of the associated interview technique have been assessed [e.g., see Clifford 1978, Graham 1978, Sollenberger 1978, Mullen 1978, Lado 1978, Clark 1978, Carroll 1967]. In the ten years since its final version was developed [see Sollenberger 1978:11], it has been used successfully to assess language proficiency in training military, civil and foreign service personnel [Sollenberger 1978, Wilds 1965], in missionary training [Graham 1978], in teacher accreditation (e.g., in New Jersey), to explicate other, standardized tests in large-scale proficiency surveys [e.g., Carroll 1967], to evaluate the language skills of Peace Corps volunteers and CIA personnel [Lovelace 1978, Clifford 1978:2], and in a study of matriculation French in Britain and Australia [Ingram 1977, 1978]. In addition, continual feedback from the work place has shown that it successfully predicts the usefulness of the learner's language in practical circumstances [see Sollenberger 1978, Wilds 1965]. Nevertheless, the FSI Scale was considered to be unsuitable for use either in the "on-arrival" programme or more generally in Australia. Several reasons led to this decision. First, the FSI Scale is, in parts, strongly influenced by its initial development for use with persons in the civil and foreign service [see Sollenberger 1978, Clark 1972:121] whereas the ASLPR was required for use with learners much more diverse in age, education, employment and language background. Second, greater definition was required at the lower end of the scale for reasons to be outlined subsequently. Third, the FSI Scale provides performance descriptions in only speaking and reading whereas, for Australian conditions, a scale was required in all four macroskills(2).

III. REASONS FOR THE APPROACH

A performance-based or "direct" approach to the assessment of proficiency attempts to specify the observable language behaviour of second

language learners at various points along the continuum from zero to native-like proficiency. In other words, it attempts to define what learners can *do* at various levels, i.e., the language tasks or speech acts they can carry out rather than just what they might *know*.

Traditionally, language proficiency has been assessed by "discrete point" tests which basically set out to assess whether the learner knows, in particular, certain points of grammar and vocabulary. Yet, much more is involved in language use than such knowledge [see Ingram 1978:Chapter 1]. A learner may, in fact, communicate quite effectively despite many "errors" and deficiencies and, conversely, one with considerable knowledge of vocabulary and of the formal syntactic system may be quite unable to use the language to carry out any worthwhile communication tasks. Furthermore, to state that a learner has followed such and such a course says little about his proficiency since, as the relative impenetrability of the interlanguage and the distinction between formal and informal learning [see Krashen 1976] make clear, what is formally taught and "learned" is not necessarily what is "acquired" or available for use in real communication situations. Furthermore, differences in aptitude and motivation mean that different learners progress at different rates and, with some learners, fossilization of the language may occur at quite low proficiency levels. Persons interviewed during the preliminary trialling of the ASLPR, for example, had attended formal classes for times ranging from 60 to over 200 hours to reach S-1-. In other words, simply to say that a learner has attended X number of classes or for X number of hours may say little about his proficiency and, equally, formal assessment of what has been taught may provide little information on the learner's actual proficiency outside the formal class.

In all, it would seem that the most meaningful way to describe proficiency is in terms of what the learner can actually do with the language, i.e., the communicative tasks he can carry out in real life as he uses

the language in the various macroskills. This clearly is what the learner, employers and other "consumers" of language skills are interested in rather than a "grade" on a more or less arbitrarily constructed test.

IV. THE ASLPR SCALE

It is in response to such considerations that the ASLPR has been developed. It sets out to define in performance (or behavioural) terms nine points along the continuum from zero to native-like proficiency in a second language for each of the four macroskills [see Appendix]. Each definition seeks to describe the tasks the learner can perform and how he performs them. Learners are rated as their language behaviour is observed in real (or at least realistic) situations and is related to the point on the scale which most nearly describes it. Except for 0 and 5, the defined points are neither absolute nor discrete. Rather, each definition exists in the context of the whole scale and in relation to adjacent definitions. Thus, to show gradation of development, some descriptions are unavoidably comparative in nature and, furthermore, the omission of a characteristic at one level and its inclusion at the next implies that it is insignificant or non-existent at the lower level. At the lower end of the scale, the points defined cluster more closely. Thus, greater definition is provided in these parts of the scale where most learners in formal classes, especially in the "on-arrival" programme, are found, where it is more difficult to handle wide ranges of proficiency in one class (and so there is need for greater differentiation amongst learners), and where the readily observable changes in language behaviour are most striking.

In using the scale, one is concerned with the overall picture of the learner's proficiency. An assessment procedure of this sort can be accused of making a subjective, global judgement of what might be analysable into objectively assessable components [see Lado 1978]. However, one can argue that a major part of language performance is the ability to mobilize the

component parts in order to carry out a language task. The direct assessment of proficiency, as used, for example, in the ASLPR, aims to assess this ability. In addition, one reason for assessing proficiency is to answer the need of learners, employers and society at large to know what the learner can do. These "consumers" characteristically make intuitive judgements about the overall skill of a language user. The ASLPR recognizes that such intuitive judgements are made but tries to give them a secure basis by directing the observer's attention towards relevant criteria and constraining his intuition and judgement to a defined (hence, challengeable and defensible) notion of proficiency and its developmental path. It could also be argued that the components that contribute to proficiency (e.g., syntactic mastery, vocabulary range, pronunciation, etc.) are differentially important and should be differentially weighted; for this reason and in order to provide additional, more objective verification of the global judgements, Wilds has developed a numerical, weighted scoring system to be used with the FSI Scale [see Sollenberger 1978:9-10 and the *Manual for Peace Corps Language Testers*, pp. 20-23]. Such a scoring system is, however, of secondary importance to the scale itself and the global assessment of the total, combined skill that its use makes. The development of a similar supplementary numerical scoring system for the ASLPR is being considered though its priority is not high.

It must be stressed that it is the observer's global assessment that is important and the definitions provided are not to be regarded as a checklist. In this respect, the ASLPR differs from the FSI Scale in which each definition is a checklist, all the requirements of which must be fulfilled before that rating can be assigned. In the ASLPR, the definitions provide an overall picture of language behaviour at each level, and the learner is assigned to the one which his performance most closely resembles. This approach recognizes that language is highly complex, that it may develop at slightly different rates in different directions, and that, there-

fore, minor but compensating variations may occur within the total picture of the learner's behaviour. In some cases "maverick" development of a component skill (especially one that is strongly influenced culturally) may occur without significantly influencing the level at which the learner is assessed. Thus, during the initial trials of the ASLPR, a Chinese businesswoman showed exceptional ability to comprehend money though her listening proficiency was estimated at only L-0+.

While reference has been made in the definitions to trends in grammatical development, mention of specific items has been avoided as far as possible (except where they are given as explanatory examples in the middle column of the scale). Clark [1972:126] deplores the mingling of linguistic and communicative competence criteria in such scales. They have been included in the ASLPR, first, because grammar is a part of language behaviour; and, second, since one's impression of the grammatical accuracy of a speaker's language influences the intuitive assessment made of his proficiency, it was considered preferable to direct the tester's judgement appropriately. Nevertheless, the grammatical examples given must not be seen as a checklist since, again, the purpose of the scale is to identify points in a complex stream of development. If, eventually, a universal schedule for L_2 development is identified, as some psycholinguists believe will happen, then one might be able to relate specific grammatical items or performance on tests of syntactic mastery to each proficiency level. As yet, however, insufficient data on L_2 development is available to do more than point to this as an interesting future possibility and, for that matter, the very existence of a universal schedule remains somewhat speculative.

The notion of language register and situational variation poses problems for a scale such as the ASLPR. Language use occurs in context and ability to use a language implies ability to use it in certain situations.

The notion of "general proficiency" unrelated to situational occurrence is meaningless and, in describing ability to use a language, one must imply ability in specified situations. The choice of situations and hence of language transactions for the ASLPR's definitions may seem to be quite arbitrary. For example, if the learner is learning the language in an ESP class for physicists, he may well not learn to give personal details (name, age, address, etc.) at an early stage. If, however, the notion of "general proficiency" has validity, it must mean ability to use the language in situations regularly encountered by speakers in the second language environment and, hence, in the situations of "everyday life". Such language would seem to be usable to some extent (even if with circumlocutions) in all situations. However, the notion "everyday life" is not much easier to explicate than "general proficiency" but, although "everyday situations" are not identical for all persons (and this is allowed for in the ASLPR), they would seem to include those encountered in moving around one's environment, travelling to and from work, buying food, using public utilities, caring for one's health, and so on. In addition, most learners entering a new society have clearly identifiable survival[(3)] needs that they will first seek to satisfy and it would seem reasonable that proficiency in these should develop first. Furthermore, no register is entirely discrete (otherwise it would not be part of "the language"). Rather, each register in each situation makes its distinctive selection from the total repertoire of the language. That distinctiveness is partly in terms of the occurrence or non-occurrence of some features (especially of lexis but also of syntax, functions, meanings, phonology) and also in terms of the distinctive frequency of occurrence of particular features in the register. Thus, some degree of similarity (though certainly not identity) would seem to occur for registers to be recognized as part of the same language. The more frequent features contributing to this sense of similarity would seem to be implicit in the

notion of general or "non-specialist register" [James and Rouve 1973] and to account for the fluent speaker's register flexibility, i.e., his ability to operate to some (if varying) extent in new situations involving new registers even if with circumlocutions. In brief, though some of the examples of specific tasks given in the ASLPR and some components of the general descriptions may seem course-dependent (e.g., ability to give name, age, address, to ask the way, etc.), they are arguably implied in the notion "general proficiency".

The parameters of change through the scale reflect this point of view. Thus, the learner will first seek to satisfy his immediate survival needs; when he has done so, he will reach out to more diverse needs, to establish relationships with others, and to meet vocational needs. At the lower levels of the scale, therefore, the major parameter is the range of situations in which the language can be used. In the middle levels, once sentence formation is more or less complete, discourse development (i.e., textual or supra-sentence structuring) becomes pivotal, and, at the upper levels, register flexibility (the ability to modulate the language in response to situational change, tone, style, etc.) assumes increased importance.

The proficiency levels have been named in two ways, first, with a number from 0 to 5 for each macroskill with + and - being used for intermediate points. Like the FSI Scale, a + may be used (e.g., S-3+) to indicate that the learner is substantially above a certain proficiency (e.g., S-3) but has not attained the next level. This facility is not available below level 2[(4)] since confusion will result with levels 0+, 1- and 1+ where + and - are used to name defined intermediate levels. In any case, it is unlikely that finer discrimination at these closely clustering levels can be reliably made. Serious consideration is currently being given to re-numbering the levels from 1 to 9. In favour of doing so is the frequent use made elsewhere of the nine-point scale and the freeing of + and - for use throughout the scale in the way they can at present

be used only in the upper end. Against doing so are the danger of users believing all points are equidistant, the increased risk of teachers' adding the S, L, R and W ratings, dividing by 4 and saying that that is the learner's overall proficiency level, the need to re-number yet again if additional intermediate definitions are provided subsequently especially at the upper levels, and the fact that ESL teachers are already becoming familiar with the scale in its present form.

Secondly, proficiency levels are named with brief descriptive titles selected to characterize some aspect of language behaviour at that level. *Zero, Initial, Elementary,* and *Native-like* are self-explanatory. *Survival Proficiency* is used because it is at this level that a learner has sufficient ability in the language to be able to carry out the minimal tasks of everyday life that enable him to "survive" in the L_2 community, i.e., to satisfy his basic needs. As his language develops further, he is able to go beyond basic survival needs and to use the language to establish social relationships, and, therefore, to start to express with growing precision his personal beliefs, feelings, and ideas. This is the level of *Minimum Social Proficiency.* Beyond here, greater register flexibility starts to develop enabling the learner to meet the demands of different situations and their corollary registers. This ability ensures, for example, that he can cope with the language demands of the work-place and consequently the next two levels use the term *Professional* in their title. It should be noted that the developers of the ASLPR feel considerable dissatisfaction with the use of the term *professional* because it implies a too narrow application of the scale. To this point, however, no better alternative has presented itself. The term is used here to apply to any type of work (and not just to "the professions") and to suggest register flexibility.

It should be observed that a learner's macroskills could be at different proficiency levels (e.g., an individual's profile may be S-1+,

L-2, R-1+, W-1). Although some correlation between macroskills generally occurs, educational background and other factors may cause differential development amongst them. A learner illiterate in his L_1 will, for example, probably take longer to reach any particular level in R and W than in S and L. Therefore, in applying the scale, no inevitable correlation between S, L, R and W should be assumed and the result of assessing a learner will be a profile showing a result for S, L, R and W separately and not an average worked out by adding S, L, R and W and dividing by four.

In the presentation of the ASLPR, the first column (*General Description*) is of most significance. The second column (*Examples of Specific Tasks*) exemplifies what can be observed at each level; it is not exhaustive and does not present absolute criteria, course specifications, or a proficiency checklist. Furthermore, the tasks exemplified might take different forms and some (e.g., those dependent on experience of certain specific situations) might not appear at all. Thus, for example, someone who never travels by bus may not have mastered the language used by bus commuters. One would, however, expect, as noted earlier, compensating or comparable development in other tasks or in some other area of the language.

V. USES OF THE ASLPR

As already noted, the ASLPR allows the proficiency of a second language learner to be expressed in performance terms so that the "consumer" (e.g., the learner himself, a potential employer, or an educational institution) understands clearly what the learner can do in the language. While the scale was initially developed for use with ESL learners in Australia, if it has envisaged the abstract concept of language proficiency correctly, the scale should be usable with learners of other second languages. Such an instrument, if it gains broad acceptance, would be valuable in a society that makes use of diverse languages for diverse purposes. Thus, for in-

stance, salary loadings for "bilingual" employees could be related to real language proficiency, minimum standards for language teacher accreditation could be specified, and the language skills of translators and interpreters clearly stated. In addition, it would be invaluable for research purposes, enabling, for example, a clearer picture to be obtained of a nation's language resources by providing a more exact means of stating proficiency levels in sociolinguistic surveys..

Within a language teaching programme, the ASLPR serves several purposes. First, it enables one to assess a learner's entry point and to place him in an appropriate course. Second, it enables one to state the learner's proficiency in terms of the actual use he can make of the language and so it gives meaning to proficiency certification [see Galbally Review 1978:44]. Third, prior to the course, the teacher can set clear goals, clarify for the learners the nature of their language skills, and state what they can realistically hope to achieve [see the Galbally Review 1978:44]. It will also ensure that other participants (teachers, course planners, and money-providers) have realistic expectations about second language programmes. Fourth, comparison of entry and exit proficiency levels enables learners to assess their progress and teachers to evaluate their teaching and the success and suitability of the programme. Such assessment will be facilitated when data has been accumulated on the times taken by various categories of learner (determined, particularly, by educational background, L_1, and aptitude) to move between the various points of the scale [cf. FSI Institute of Language Studies 1973]. This facility will also enable teachers to plan programmes more relevant to need without wasting resources on unnecessarily long or uneffectually short courses. Fifth, where learners move from one language teaching centre to another, the ASLPR provides a means of facilitating transfer into an appropriate class without the necessary judgement being confused by such extraneous factors as the differ-

ent courses taught in different centres or the length of time spent in an L_2 environment or in class. Sixth, the scale (or, more precisely, the associated interview procedure) can have a diagnostic function in identifying areas of need in the learner's language and thus guiding formal teaching [cf. Graham 1978:7]. Finally, by correlating the scale with available objective, indirect tests of proficiency, one can explicate the latter by relating their statements on proficiency to actual language performance [see Carroll 1967; Clark 1972:131].

It should, of course, be noted that the ASLPR is concerned with *second* language proficiency. Instruments used to measure L_2 proficiency do not seem to transfer readily for use with L_1 speakers [see Angoff and Sharon 1970] and, without careful prior investigation, it would be quite incorrect to use the ASLPR to rate L_1 proficiency. For this reason and because the scale is already gaining acceptance beyond its initial area of use and with persons outside of the second language teaching profession, it was recently decided to modify the title to include the word "second". Thus, it is now known as the ASLPR and not the ALPR.

VI. *CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS*

Learners are assessed against the ASLPR in interviews conducted for the purpose. The technique to be adopted cannot be discussed here though it is outlined in the *Teacher's Manual for the A.M.E.P.* ("on-arrival" programme) published by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. The interview techniques adopted must ensure that the learner is given the opportunity to display his full proficiency in situations that replicate as closely as possible those of real life [cf. Clark 1972:124]. Studies such as those reported by Clifford [1978], Clark [1972:127; 1978], Graham [1978], and Mullen [1978], have shown that, where this does occur, interviews can yield valid ratings with a high degree of inter- and intra-rater reliability.

VII. PRINCIPAL FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ASLPR

An instrument of the complexity of the ASLPR requires detailed study and evaluation with different learners, in different situations, by as large a number of people as possible. Informal trialling during which some hundreds of ESL teachers have used it to rate learners have proved very successful with a strikingly high degree of inter-rater reliability. Some problems inherent in direct approaches to the assessment of proficiency have also emerged. In one experiment, for instance [John Mills, personal communication], teachers applying the scale to learners they had taught throughout a course consistently rated those learners with personal characteristics positively marked for teachers two or three points higher than did two experienced testers from the Joint Committee. On the other hand, learners with negative characteristics (e.g., disruptive in class) were rated closer to the experts' levels. It is probable that ratings on the ASLPR should not be assigned by teachers to their own students.

Formal trialling of the scales and of the interview procedures recommended is about to commence. Two interviews at each level from 0+ to 5 will be videorecorded and rated by 16 teachers, four each in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. The teachers will also be asked to observe videorecorded interviews showing a reading test and to examine examples of the learners' writing. Consistency in applying the definitions will be assessed using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. H-Grouping will be used to assess the congruence of the teachers' interpretations of the definitions with the researchers who developed the scale. Dendograms will be drawn to further examine the similarity amongst the teachers in applying the scale. Intra-rater reliability will be assessed by replicating these procedures some time later. An assessment of validity will be sought by correlating results on the ASLPR with results on established standardized tests such as TOEFL, CELT, and the Michigan Test of

English Language Proficiency. Clearly, difficulties exist in assessing the significance of such correlation or the lack of it because of the different assumptions made by direct approaches to the assessment of proficiency and discrete-point, pencil-and-paper tests. Further estimates of validity will be sought by interviewing the learners' teachers, employers and colleagues to establish their impression of their proficiency in everyday life and in the work-place. It is also intended to extend the trials overseas to assess the suitability of the ASLPR for use as an international scale by non-native teachers, by teachers speaking a different variety of English, and by teachers with a different cultural background. Provided that research funds are available, this will be done by replicating the trial procedures using the same videorecordings in Singapore and Los Angeles.

Prior to the formal trialling, the existing definitions are to be re-considered to remove any anomalies, deficiencies or lack of systematization that have been identified to date. In addition, they will be re-considered for their applicability to languages other than English and for use with adolescent as well as adult learners. Again, provided that research funds are made available, formal trialling with learners of languages other than English will be undertaken. At some later date, additional intermediate points (e.g., 2-, 2+, 3+, 4+) might also be provided. Other potential areas for development have already been mentioned in passing.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The ASLPR has been devised to provide a rational performance-based framework for the specification of goals and learner proficiency in second language teaching programmes. Its usefulness hopefully extends beyond the "on-arrival" ESL programme for which it was originally designed to other areas involving second language learning. In particular, its major contribution lies in the analysis it provides of the development of second

language proficiency and the performance-based definitions of proficiency levels that permit the practical skills attained by learners to be precisely stated.

FOOTNOTES

1. The Queensland Working Party consisted of David Ingram and Elaine Wylie with assistance at various times from John Mills, Gary Birch, Eila Curtis, Bill Eggington, Tom Ellis, Kerry Fairbairn, Glyn John, members of the Commonwealth Education Department, Canberra, and the Joint Committee.

2. The term "macroskills" refers to speaking, listening, reading and writing. It was first used by James and Rouve [1973] to avoid the ambiguity in the commoner "skills".

3. By "survival" needs is intended the language that a learner needs to be able to "survive" in the L_2 community, i.e., to carry out the minimal tasks of everyday life such as buying food, clothing and shelter, finding his way round, using public transport, and so on.

4. It must be stressed that below 2, + is used differently from the FSI Scale. In the ASLPR, + and - mark defined points more or less evenly spaced between adjacent points. That is, the scale defines points providing steps from 0 to 1 (0 to 0+ to 1- to 1) and two from 1 to 2 (1 to 1+ to 2).

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AUSTRALIAN SECOND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY RATINGS (ASLPR)

S = Speaking

L = Listening

W = Writing

R = Reading

This is a five-step scale (6 levels, 0 to 5) in which evenly spaced intermediate points are marked with + or - .

He is to be taken as common gender.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TASKS	COMMENT
Level 0 Zero Proficiency Unable to function in the language. Verbal production (whether oral or written) is limited to occasional isolated words. Little or no comprehension of even the mo t simplified and slowed speech and simplified written language. Essentially no communicative ability.		

GENERAL DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TASKS	COMMENT
S-0+ Initial Proficiency Able to operate only in a very limited capacity within very predictable areas of need. Vocabulary limited to that necessary to express simple elementary needs and basic courtesy formulae. Syntax is fragmented, inflections and word endings (especially consonants) frequently omitted, and the majority of his utterances consist of isolated words or short formulae. Utterances rarely consist of more than two or three words and are marked by frequent long pauses and repetition of an interlocutor's words. Expression is often excessively marked by culturally inappropriate non-verbal features and sympathetic noises. Pronunciation is frequently unintelligible and is strongly influenced by first language. Can be understood only with difficulty even by persons (eg, officials) used to speaking with new arrivals or in interactions (eg, with shop assistants) where the context strongly supports the utterance.	Can give own name, age, address, phone number, number of children, nationality, and name of first language. Can use some basic greetings; can say *yes, no, pardon, excuse me, please, thank you, sorry*. Can spell out own name and those of his family.	Interference from socio-cultural factors is particularly marked at this level and may inhibit language performance (eg, if the L_1 culture regards contradiction as impolite, *yes - no* questions may always be answered *yes* even though the correct answer is *no* and the *no* answer form has been mastered.
L-0+ Initial Proficiency Able to comprehend only a very restricted range of simple utterances within the most predictable areas of need and only in face-to-face situations with people used to dealing with new arrivals. Can comprehend only slow, deliberate speech in face-to-face situations. May require much repetition, paraphrase and the support of exaggerated mime and gesture. He commonly responds to isolated words in utterances. Misunderstandings are frequent and even short utterances must frequently be repeated. Able to comprehend responses to his own simple questions pertinent to survival needs where those responses do not deviate far from the expected response. Can comprehend only very simple requests for basic personal information (eg, from officials, bank clerks, doctor's receptionist) where context makes the nature of the request predictable and the forms closely match the formulae he has learnt. Can comprehend the simplest sentence structures only when supported by the context or other redundant features. Comprehends few non-verbal features not found in his culture. While listening, tends to make excessive use of "sympathetic" features (eg, nod, *yes, thank you*, repetition of speaker's words).	Can comprehend simple, predictable requests in predictable forms for personal and family information (name, date of birth; country of origin, language, telephone number, occupation). Less predictable questions are frequently interpreted as statements despite structure, intonation and context. Can comprehend basic time modifiers (eg, *today, tomorrow*) and days of the week. Can comprehend nod or shake of head, indication of direction (pointing, beckoning), extension of hand.	The ability to differentiate between surname, given names etc. will depend on previous learning experiences and need not reflect upon language proficiency.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TASKS	COMMENT
W-0+ Initial Proficiency Able to write clearly a limited number of words or short formulae pertinent to the most predictable areas of need in his everyday life. Can write with reasonable phonetic accuracy short, one-syllable words that are in his oral vocabulary and are pertinent to his written needs. Can write limited personal details about self and family (but not necessarily in sentences).	Can copy names of everyday objects, names of shops and street signs. Can write own name, address, age, date of arrival in Australia, and those of his family. Can write short, familiar, mainly one-syllable words when said aloud by himself or others, not necessarily with correct spelling but with reasonable phonetic accuracy.	By *writing* is intended the ability to transfer sound into script. Whether acceptable cursive writing as well as print can be used at the lowest proficiency levels will vary according to the learner's background. His ability to read cursive writing will depend on similar factors but also on the writer's letter formation.
R-0+ Initial Proficiency Able to read only a limited range of essential sight words and short simple sentences whose forms have been memorized in response to immediate needs. Can recognize most letters of the printed alphabet; can recognize common names and other isolated words whose forms he has memorized and which are essential to his everyday living; can read most of them aloud, but comprehensibility may suffer because of sketchy knowledge of sound-symbol correspondence and inaccurate articulation. Is generally unable to recode unfamiliar words into sound.	Can identify the names of his family and place of living; can recognize names of common shops and familiar street signs. Can identify and read aloud the names of common everyday objects as learnt in response to his survival needs, though not necessarily with correct pronunciation.	At this level the beginnings of sound-symbol correspondence and visual memory for word shapes are emerging. The length of time needed to reach it will vary according to the learner's previous level of literacy, the scripts (if any) with which he is familiar, and the transferability of the sound-symbol relationships from his L_1 to English.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TASKS	COMMENT
S-1- Elementary Proficiency Able to satisfy immediate needs using learned utterances. More spontaneity and flexibility are evident than at the previous stage but there is no real autonomy of expression; there is a slight increase in utterance length but frequent long pauses and repetition of interlocutor's words still occur. Can ask questions or make statements with reasonable accuracy only where this involves short memorized utterances or formulae. Most utterances are telegraphic and word endings (both inflectional and non-inflectional) are often omitted. Vocabulary is limited to areas of immediate survival needs. Although he can differentiate most phonemes when he produces them in isolation, when they are combined in words or groups of words, errors are frequent and, even with repetition, may severely inhibit communication even with persons used to dealing with such learners. May rely heavily on (often inappropriate) sympathetic noises and gesture to aid communication.	Can produce utterances in fragmentary grammar which may consist of, eg, no more than noun, verb and modifier. Can use English over the telephone only in the most limited contexts where the information given or request made is highly predictable (eg, to request an interpreter from the Telephone Interpreter Service). Can buy tickets on public transport using utterances such as *"Two returns Central, please."* Can make simple purchases in restricted and predictable situations where he can point, state what is wanted and ask price. Can spell out name and address.	The extent of use of sympathetic noises and gesture is heavily influenced by cultural background and personality.
L-1- Elementary Proficiency Able to comprehend readily only utterances thoroughly familiar to him or that are predictable within the areas of his immediate survival needs. In less familiar utterances he still tends to identify and respond to isolated words which will often cause him to misunderstand and make inappropriate responses. Still heavily dependent on face-to-face contact. Although he can recognize many basic patterns of structure and intonation, his tentative grammatical knowledge will still cause him to confuse many sentence meanings. Can comprehend only the commonest non-verbal features and has a developing awareness of some variants of them.	Can comprehend requests for personal details (name, age, address, etc.) and short statements about others. Frequently interprets questions as statements unless repeated and redundantly marked by sentence structure, *Wh*-word, strong upward intonation, or context. Comprehends commands, requests and simple directions relating to how to get from X to Y only when supported by obvious non-verbal features. Cannot comprehend telephone, radio or television. Can comprehend two digit numbers (e.g. *thirty-six*) or three digit numbers with numerals isolated (e.g., *one six four.*) Can comprehend high frequency sums of money in dollars and cents to $100 but only when the sum does not exceed three digits. Readily comprehends simple past, present and future tenses only if supported by an appropriate modifier. Can comprehend minimal variants of basic non-verbal features such as assent, negation or indication of direction.	Ability to comprehend sums of money is strongly influenced by cultural, vocational, personality and situational factors.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TASKS	COMMENT
W-1- Elementary Proficiency Able to write with reasonable accuracy short words and brief familiar utterances. Can form all letters of the alphabet; can write (not necessarily with formal accuracy) the names of everyday objects in his area of need, basic personal details, and a short simple sentence or brief instruction relating to matters in his area of immediate need or with which he is very familiar.	Can write short familiar words with reasonable accuracy though he may need to sound them out. Can write a phrase or short sentence (not necessarily accurately) to give basic details about himself and his family, to reply to a query, or to convey simple information (eg., to identify a photograph of a familiar scene). Can copy short written sentences (eg., giving directions how to go from X to Y.	
R-1- Elementary Proficiency Able to read short simple sentences and short instructions. Can recognize and name most of the upper and lower case letters of the printed alphabet. Can read short, original sentences of one clause on familiar topics. Fluency is restricted by syntactic knowledge, vocabulary, cultural knowledge and inability to handle longer sentences or the discourse structure of even short texts. Silent reading may be accompanied by oral re-coding. Word recognition may depend heavily on his sounding out the letters. Despite awareness of the more frequent sound-symbol correspondences, confusion will often result from the possible alternatives.	Can identify and read aloud common words (eg., names of shops and everyday objects). Can read aloud with reasonable accuracy words containing familiar sound-symbol correspondences, though stress patterns may be faulty. Can comprehend short written directions (eg., to go from X to Y) or simple one-sentence instructions (eg., arranging time and place to meet).	

GENERAL DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TASKS	COMMENT
S-1 Minimum Survival Proficiency Able to satisfy basic survival needs and minimum courtesy requirements. In areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics, can ask and answer simple questions, initiate and respond to simple statements, and maintain very simple, face-to- face conversations. Vocabulary inadequate to express anything but the most elementary needs; fractured sentence structure and other grammatical errors are frequent; and strong interference from L_1 occurs in articulation, stress and intonation. Misunderstandings frequently arise from his limited vocabulary and grammar and erroneous phonology but, with repetition, can generally be understood by a native speaker used to dealing with foreigners attempting to speak his language. Little precision in information conveyed owing to tentative state of grammatical development and little or no use of modifiers. Has not developed skills in a specialist register though, where such a register has been experienced, he may have acquired some relevant items.	Despite hesitations, fragmented syntax and many repetitions, can give personal details (name, address, nationality, marital status, occupation, date and place of birth, date of arrival in Australia) and maintain very simple conversations on topics that are familiar and interesting to him; can express likes and dislikes in areas that are of particular interest to himself: can make an introduction and use basic greeting and leave-taking expressions; can ask and tell time of day, day and date; can make simple transactions in shops, post offices or banks; can verbalize his inability to understand, ask for slower repetition of utterance, spelling of name or address. Depending on need and previous experience, can order a simple meal, ask for shelter or lodging, ask and give simple directions (eg., tell someone how to get from X to Y); can use public transport (buses, trains and taxis, ask for basic information, ask and give directions, and buy tickets).	
L-1 Minimum Survival Proficiency Able to comprehend enough to meet basic survival needs. Can comprehend short utterances and some longer ones provided the content is familiar to him or they are in response to his own simple questions pertinent to personal details or survival needs in his everyday life in Australia; may require frequent repetition, slow deliberate rate of utterance (eg., 80-100 w.p.m.) and frequent paraphrases; understands readily only common social formulae or other short, simple, familiar utterances. Lacks discourse mastery and generally unable to relate even a short series of utterances. Has very limited ability to cope with specialist registers though he may comprehend some items pertinent to areas of activity he has experienced.	Can comprehend simple directions relating to how to get from X to Y, by foot or public transport; can comprehend time of day, day and date and appointments; can comprehend three digit numbers if said slowly and deliberately, and sums of money of equivalent difficulty; cannot cope with verbal number operations. Can respond to simple high-frequency instructions in the work situation. Has great difficulty in using a telephone or comprehending radio or television. Is to only a limited extent sensitive enough to suprasegmental and paralinguistic features to discriminate "tone" of utterances (eg., polite, rude, friendly, unfriendly, etc.)	

GENERAL DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TASKS	COMMENT
W-1 Minimum Survival Proficiency Able to satisfy basic survival needs. Can write all letters of the alphabet and copy most sentences accurately. Can write personal details and a short series of sentences about things with which he is familiar (not necessarily with formal accuracy in lexis and syntax but comprehensibly). Longer utterances or longer series of utterances tend to lose coherence.	Can fill in uncomplicated forms with personal details (name, address, nationality, marital status). Can write simple sentences including brief instructions (eg., to door-to-door vendors). Can copy from written script quite accurately the sorts of information indicated in R-1. Can copy down when presented orally name, address, appointment and simple directions. Can fill out bank deposit and withdrawal forms. Can produce a short series of simple sentences on a familiar topic (eg., personal details for a job application, short simple narration of an everyday occurrence).	
R-1 Minimum Survival Proficiency Able to read personal and place names, street signs, office and shop designations, numbers, isolated words and phrases, and short sentences. Can recognize and name all the upper and lower case letters in the printed version of the alphabet. Can read simple sentences with ease but may have difficulty with sentences of greater complexity. Can read and comprehend (but not necessarily fluently) very short, syntactically simple texts concerning his everyday life (cf. L-1), but has considerable difficulty in comprehending texts with more complex discourse structure.	Can read uncomplicated forms requiring basic personal details (names, address, nationality, marital status) but will require help in comprehending others. Can comprehend short, high frequency traffic signs, shop designations, bus and train destinations, basic timetables, and common Australian menus. From lists (eg., street directory, index) can isolate the information he requires. Can use the "Yellow Pages" to find a tradesman. Can read a notice for a function and identify the nature, name, location, date and time of the event. Can read a short series of simple sentences narrating an everyday event. Can comprehend and act on a short series of simple instructions for using an everyday object (provided they do not contain unfamiliar specialist vocabulary).	

GENERAL DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TASKS	COMMENT
S-1+ Survival Proficiency Able to satisfy all survival needs and limited social demands. Developing flexibility in a range of circumstances beyond his immediate survival needs. Shows some spontaneity in language production but fluency is very uneven. Can initiate and sustain a general conversation but has little understanding of the social conventions of conversation; grammatical errors still frequently cause misunderstanding. Limited vocabulary range necessitates much hesitation and circumlocution. The commoner tense forms occur but errors are frequent in formation and selection. Can use most question forms. Word order, even in short utterances, may frequently be wrong, and can create misunderstandings. Cannot sustain coherent structures in longer utterances or unfamiliar situations. Ability to describe and give precise information is limited by still tentative emergence of modification devices. Aware of basic cohesive features (eg., pronouns, verb inflections), but many are unreliable, especially if less immediate in reference. Simple discourse markers (eg., *so, but, then*) are used relating to closely contiguous parts of the text but extended discourse is largely a series of discrete utterances. Articulation is reasonably comprehensible to native speakers, can combine most phonemes with reasonable comprehensibility, but still has difficulty in producing certain sounds, in certain positions, or in certain combinations and speech may still be laboured. Stress and intonation patterns are not native-like and may interfere with communication. Still has to repeat utterances frequently to make himself understood by the general public. Has very limited register flexibility though, where a specialist register has been experienced, may have acquired some features of it.	Can cope with less routine situations in shops, post office, bank, (eg., asking for a larger size, returning an unsatisfactory purchase), and on public transport, (eg., asking passenger where to get off for unfamiliar destination). Can explain some personal symptoms to a doctor but with limited precision. Can modify utterances to express uncertainty or the hypothetical by single word or other simple devices (eg., *possibly, I think*) and has tentative use of *if* (conditional). Can express simple *because* relationship. Often makes inappropriate use of honorifics. In work situation can communicate most routine needs not requiring special register (eg., out of expendable commodity or a machine overheating) and basic details of unpredictable occurrences, eg., an accident. Can ask the meaning of an unfamiliar word, or ask for the English word for a demonstrable item. Can generally use *I, me, you, we, my, your*, but other personal pronouns and possessive adjectives are often hesitant or wrong.	From this level on he has a significant language repertoire so that he can comprehend texts containing an increasing number of unfamiliar language items or cultural references. He now has a sufficient language base to benefit greatly in language learning from out-of-class experience and to permit him to explore the language by enquiry from native speakers. The thrust of development through this level is towards more spontaneity and creativity, increased flexibility but still in essentially survival-type situations with a start to more general social interaction. Ability to comprehend still depends greatly on the native speaker's modifying his language appropriately. Immediate memory is less restricted, operations less laboured, and some textual facility is starting to emerge. Cultural interference may create unease in use of second person pronouns and persons' names for learners of some backgrounds. Some pronunciation problems will persist well beyond this stage. The ability to acquire flexibility in social register varies greatly according to the background, sensitivity and personality of the individual

GENERAL DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TASKS	COMMENT
L-1+ Survival Proficiency Able to satisfy all survival needs and limited social demands. Can understand in all situations relevant to his survival needs. Less dependent on contextual support but comprehension is still significantly assisted by face-to-face contact, careful articulation and slow rate of utterance (eg., 100-120 w.p.m). Provided the topic discussed is familiar, he is able to extrapolate the meaning of occasional unknown words from the context and deduce sentence meaning. While global comprehension of utterances may be generally secure, deficiencies in the listening skill will often lead him to miss more specific information; misinterpretations are frequent and, in less familiar situations, he may require repetition, paraphrase or explanation. More sensitive to morphology, recognizes changes of tense, and generally comprehends regular forms without having to rely on contextual support. Has much difficulty comprehending extended lines of argument and comprehends only the simplest discourse markers. Has little ability in specialist registers but can follow routine communications in the work.place and some unpredictable utterances provided they involve mainly the non-specialist register or are supported by the context. Can generally distinguish statements, questions and commands by intonation, etc., but has limited ability to deduce other than surface meaning. Unable to mobilize much cultural knowledge to assist comprehension.	Can hear the more prominent contracted forms in careful speech. Recognizes simple relationships between short combinations of clauses and sentences (e.g., marked by *and, but, if, because)* but fails to comprehend more complex relationships or more complex discourse marked over a longer text. Can comprehend only isolated words or phrases in a conversation between native speakers and will fail to comprehend the subsumed cultural knowledge. Has no facility in comprehending speakers of dialects other than that most frequently experienced. Comprehends very little of a radio broadcast and has great difficulty using the telephone. Can comprehend only broad train of events of a T.V. drama, little of less visually supported telecasts though has fair comprehension of frequently repeated commercials said slowly in the standard dialect without significant cultural assumptions. If heavily marked, understands the implied annoyance, sarcasm, etc. in such utterances as *"Haven't you finished yet?"* or *"That's great!"* Can act on a simple series of commands such as *"Find a rag and clean the bench"* and negative commands such as *"Don't touch that button."*	"Modification devices"are defined as those forms (eg., verb forms, adjectives, adverbs, phrases, clauses, etc.) that are used to modify and qualify ideas and give precision to the expression of thought.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TASKS	COMMENT
W-1+ Survival Proficiency Able to satisfy all survival needs and limited social needs. Can write a sufficiently wide range of informal English to satisfy his survival needs though errors in spelling and style may frequently interfere with comprehension. Can write most words and sentences he can produce orally but longer utterances and texts may lack coherence through a failure to maintain sentence structure, to structure the thought sequence acceptably, or to use discourse markers appropriately. Has the ability to use a bilingual dictionary to check spelling. Aware of but not confident with the formal devices used in writing letters and has limited ability to vary them to match different recipients.	Can write a simple covering letter (eg., to accompany a cheque or a completed job application form). Can convey a simple message by telegram (eg., accepting job offered) though the conventions and form may often be inappropriate. Can write a note to school explaining a child's absence or requesting leave for the child. Can take down a simple message in note form.	
R-1+ Survival Proficiency Able to read short texts on subjects related to his immediate needs. Can follow a simple compound or complex sentence, but has little ability to handle many discourse markers commonly used in the written register. With some use of a bilingual dictionary, can read for pleasure simplified versions of standard texts. His word attack is now sufficiently developed for him to be able to recognize most words in his oral vocabulary. However, he will still be confused by silent letters, and rarely occurring non-phonetic forms.	Can understand a simple circular sent home from school on a familiar topic, eg., start of swimming season, or on an unfamiliar topic, eg., an excursion, provided that some prior explanation has been given. Using a bilingual dictionary can read a popular novel or short story simplified for L_2 learners. Can comprehend texts in which discourse is marked by such simple features as those indicated in S-1+. Can follow the instructions on a public telephone provided he is familiar with words such as *dial tone* and *receiver*. Can discriminate between widely differing letters such as an apparently personalized sales promotion and correspondence requiring action (eg., overdue account or alteration to delivery routine) even if neither is fully understood. Can understand straightforward classified advertisements (eg., positions vacant) provided they do not contain many abbreviations.	

GENERAL DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TASKS	COMMENT
S-2 Minimum Social Proficiency Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements. Can handle with confidence but not facility most social situations including introductions and casual conversations about current events, as well as work, family, and autobiographical information. Has restricted register flexibility though, where a specialist register has been experienced, will have acquired some features of it. Has limited ability to vary the "tone" of his utterances. Can handle limited work requirements but will need help in handling any complications or difficulties. Hesitations are still frequent as he searches for vocabulary or grammar but has a speaking vocabulary sufficient to express himself simply with some circumlocutions on most topics pertinent to his everyday life in Australia; can usually handle elementary constructions quite accurately but does not have thorough or confident control of the grammar especially in longer constructions. Accent, though often quite faulty, is intelligible; undue exertion on the part of a native speaking listener is not often necessary though some repetition in order to be understood may occur. Overall rate of utterance remains less than the native speaker's as a result of hesitations. Cohesion and discourse in short utterances or texts are secure but inconsistencies occur in longer ones.	Can give detailed information about his family, living conditions, educational background; can describe and converse on everyday things in his environment (eg., his suburb, the weather); can describe his present or most recent job or activity; can communicate on the spot with fellow workers or immediate superior (eg., ask questions about his job, make complaints about work conditions, or ask for changes in work conditions, time off, etc.); can give simple messages over the telephone; can give directions and instructions for simple tasks in his everyday life (eg., to tradesmen). Has tentative use of polite request forms, eg., involving *could, would.* May sometimes offend by unintended blandness or aggressiveness or irritate by over-deference where native speakers expect informality.	At this level, the learner's ability is sufficient to enable him to establish normal social relationships with native speakers.
L-2 Minimum Social Proficiency Able to understand in routine social situations and limited work situations. Can get the gist of most conversations in everyday social situations though he may sometimes misinterpret or need utterances to be repeated or reworded. Less dependent on face-to-face contact, and the presence of other participants in the conversation does not normally cause comprehension problems. Has limited ability to comprehend if there is extensive use of specialist registers though, in his own field, can, with paraphrase or explanation, comprehend routine conversations. Has some ability to see beyond surface meaning and to comprehend less subtle or esoteric cultural implications. Can cope with the lower range of normal native speaker rates of utterance (eg.,120-150 w.p.m) but is soon lost with faster rates and has difficulty in understanding conversations between native speakers. Has some difficulty following extended lines of argument or complex discourse patterns.	Can readily understand the sort of information indicated in S-2 especially if given directly to him; can take simple telephone messages in response to his own questions or on familiar or expected topics; can comprehend and act on sequential instructions at work (eg., "*When the red light goes off, push the button.*"); does not fully comprehend television or radio broadcasts but can get the gist of news bulletins or other programmes on familiar topics delivered at lower rates of utterance. Can in most situations broadly discriminate the "tone" of utterances (eg., irony).	

GENERAL DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TASKS	COMMENT
W-2 Minimum Social Proficiency Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements. He can handle (with moderate confidence and sufficient accuracy that comprehension by a monolingual native speaker is not impeded) those written forms he needs in his everyday life at home, in daily commerce, and in simple work situations not requiring specialist skills.	Can write a personal letter on simple everyday topics, or a simple report on an everyday event. Can write to order goods, book a room, or to carry out other uncomplicated and routine tasks. Can fill out most forms regularly encountered in everyday life in Australia (eg., Medibank, CES, passport application, etc.)	
R-2 Minimum Social Proficiency Able to read simple prose, in a form equivalent to typescript or printing, on subjects within a familiar context. With extensive use of a bilingual dictionary can get the sense of those written forms frequently met in his everyday life. Can read for pleasure simply structured prose and literary and other texts which do not assume significant cultural knowledge, ability to handle complex discourse structure, or a specialist register. Can read neat cursive writing but more slowly.	Using a bilingual dictionary, can get the sense of personal letters on everyday topics, simple stylized forms such as invitations and replies, routine, uncomplicated business letters, news items from the daily press (but longer reports and commentaries only with considerable difficulty), and simple articles in technical fields relevant to his work experience. Can follow most clearly presented sequential instructions (eg., accompanying a household appliance) when they are written in a non-specialist register, when he has plenty of time and has use of a bilingual dictionary. Can read fluently for pleasure modern novels simplified for the non-native reader.	

GENERAL DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TASKS	COMMENT
S-3 Minimum Professional Proficiency Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social and vocational topics. Can discuss his own particular interests and special fields of competence with reasonable ease though some circumlocutions; vocabulary is broad enough that he rarely has to grope for a word and can readily overcome gaps with circumlocutions; accent may be obviously foreign; control of grammar good; able to convey his meaning precisely in reasonably complex sentences or by using with reasonable accuracy a wide range of modification devices; fluency is rarely disrupted by hesitations; errors rarely interfere with understanding or disturb the native speaker; able to modify his language to meet the differing register requirements of situations with which he is familiar in his personal and vocational life but can make secure use of only high frequency colloquialisms.	Can handle with confidence most social situations and those work situations relevant to his own needs and experience. Can enter, exit from and participate in conversation with or between native speakers; can speak to educated native speakers or to those at his own socio-economic level on general or relevant professional topics without unintentionally amusing or irritating them, can present and debate his own or others' ideas and attitudes on topics with which he is familiar or which are relevant to his native or Australian culture; can cope with everyday, difficult linguistic situations such as broken plumbing, a personal misunderstanding, undeserved traffic ticket, etc.	The key factor now emerging is register flexibility (as well as continued development in fluency and accuracy).
L-3 Minimum Professional Proficiency Able to comprehend sufficiently readily to be able to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations with native speakers on social topics and on those vocational topics relevant to his interests and experience. Can comprehend most conversations between native speakers though not always in great detail. Comprehension rarely affected by complex discourse patterns. Can generally understand at normal rates of utterance (about 180 w.p.m.) even if occasional words are unfamiliar, and rarely has to ask for an utterance to be repeated or paraphrased, except where speech is heavily loaded with colloquial features.	Can take information confidently by telephone; can comprehend a discourse or discussion on a non-technical subject and can, if necessary, take notes or summarize it; has reasonable comprehension of radio and television news readers (180 w.p.m.) though more rapid speakers may cause comprehension to suffer. Can comprehend most sums of money and most numerals though longer items may have to be repeated.	It should be noted that colloquial speech may entail changes in every aspect of language, including vocabulary, syntax, semantics, phonology, rate of utterance and paralinguistics.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TASKS	COMMENT
W-3 Minimum Professional Proficiency Able to write with sufficient accuracy in structures and spelling to meet all social demands and basic work needs. Can write with reasonable ease and accuracy on matters relevant to his interest, rarely lacks a word and is then able to circumvent it. Can use complex sentences accurately and can vary his style between personal and vocational contexts and use the functions appropriate to them.	Can write in all those forms used in daily life (personal letters, notes, telegrams, invitations, etc.) without errors intruding on a native speaker's comprehension and acceptance. Can use those basic registers he needs in his work situation and other routine business letters of his everyday life. Can generally use even complex sentence structures accurately. Discourse structure beyond the sentence level may still sometimes seem non-native. Can vary his style over broad parameters (eg., between personal and professional contexts) though may lack some subtlety in differentiating between some contexts.	Dimension of change from here to R-5, W-5 lies in breadth of vocabulary, accuracy of syntax, and flexibility of style or sensitivity to style.
R-3 Minimum Professional Proficiency Able to read standard newspaper items addressed to the general reader, routine correspondence, reports and technical material in his special field, and other everyday materials (e.g., best-selling novels and similar recreational literature). Can grasp the essentials of articles of the above types without using a dictionary; for accurate understanding moderately frequent use of a dictionary is required. Has occasional difficulty with unusually complex structures and low-frequency idioms. Can read neat cursive writing.	Can read standard newspaper items and routine personal and business correspondence in his field of interest and readily grasp their essential meaning. Can read such items and paraphrase or summarize their key points. Has some sensitivity to variations in style and register and to nuances in meaning but will frequently fail to perceive those that are more subtle or more culturally dependent. Is able to read extended texts (eg., novels) with sufficient comprehension without reference to a dictionary to ensure pleasure even though some words will be unknown.	

GENERAL DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TASKS	COMMENT
S-4 Full Professional Proficiency Able to use the language fluently and accurately on all levels normally pertinent to his personal, social, academic or vocational needs. Can participate in any conversation within the range of his experience with a high degree of fluency and precision of vocabulary; while he has mastered commonly occurring colloquial and idiomatic forms, some misuse of other items may occur; would rarely be taken for a native speaker, but can respond appropriately even in unfamiliar situations; while a "foreign accent" may continue (especially in intonation and stress patterns), pronunciation does not impede comprehension by a native speaker; errors of grammar are quite rare and unsystematic and he can usually correct them in retrospect; his language is always easily understood by a native speaker. Has considerable sensitivity to register requirements and can readily modify his language appropriately.	Can convey his exact meaning in social and professional discussions unrestricted by lexical or grammatical deficiencies; can modify his speech deliberately according to the situation and its register requirements; can handle informal interpreting from and into his first language if necessary.	Cultural understanding now plays a significant part in promoting language use. Grammatical development is now more or less complete though "slips" or errors of performance may still occur. The learner can, however, usually correct such errors if he becomes conscious of them.
L-4 Full Professional Proficiency Can comprehend easily and accurately in all personal and social contexts and in all academic or vocational contexts relevant to his experience. Can readily understand all educated speech (or that variety of Australian English he normally encounters) in any context relevant to his personal, social, academic or vocational life and is rarely troubled by speech in other contexts; can comprehend the generally recognized varieties of Australian English and other similar varieties; only occasionally baffled by colloquialisms and regionalisms; can comprehend even fast rates of utterance (eg., 180 to 200 w.p.m. and above) in the standard dialect.	Can comprehend accurately in social and professional discussions unrestricted by lexical or grammatical deficiencies; can appreciate and respond to register variations. Can comprehend most radio and television documentaries, and accurately identify the speaker's mood, tone, etc.; can comprehend numerals as readily as does a native speaker.	

GENERAL DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TASKS	COMMENT
W-4 Full Professional Proficiency Able to write fluently and accurately on all levels normally pertinent to his personal, social, academic or vocational needs. Errors in grammar or vocabulary are very rare, rarely needs to consult a dictionary to express himself and is able to consider and select from amongst a wide choice of words and structures to make his meaning more precise. Has considerable sensitivity to register requirements and can modify his language appropriately.	Can convey his meanings precisely and accurately unrestricted by lexical, morphological, syntactic or spelling deficiencies. Can readily use all those written forms he normally encounters and can modify them according to specific register requirements. Can structure his longer texts appropriately making full use of the available devices of discourse and cohesion.	
R-4 Full Professional Proficiency Able to read all styles and forms of the language pertinent to his personal, social, academic or vocational needs. With occasional use of a dictionary can read moderately difficult prose readily in any area directed to the general reader, and all material in his special field including official and professional documents and correspondence. Reading speed will approximate that of comparably educated native speakers (eg. 250-300 w.p.m. for general prose). Cursive writing poses no greater difficulty than for a native speaker.	In addition to those skills indicated in the general description he can handle informal translation from and into his first language when the necessity arises. Can comprehend most literary forms though more difficult works (e.g., heavily culture-dependent or in a form remote from "normal" discourse) may cause some problems.	

GENERAL DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TASKS	COMMENT
S-5 Native-like Proficiency Speaking proficiency equivalent to that of an educated native speaker. Has complete fluency in the language such that his speech on all levels is fully accepted by educated native speakers in all of its features, including rate of utterance, suprasegmental and paralinguistic features, and breadth and accuracy of grammar, vocabulary, idiom, colloquialisms, and cultural references. Pronunciation and intonation may, at times, reflect non-native features but these never interfere with comprehension by native speakers. Able to operate effectively in all registers likely to be encountered in his personal, social, academic or vocational life.	Can handle all tasks he normally encounters and has native-like flexibility in new ones; can handle humour as effectively as a native speaker.	At this point all language-related cultural barriers are removed and, to all intents and purposes, he acts, and is accepted by others, as a native speaker.
L-5 Native-like Proficiency Listening proficiency equivalent to that of an educated native speaker. Has complete comprehension of the spoken language of native speakers including idiom, colloquialisms, and pertinent cultural references, whether spoken face-to-face, by telephone or on the media. Able to comprehend fully all varieties and registers he is likely to encounter in his personal, social, academic or vocational life and has sufficient flexibility to comprehend others as effectively as most educated native speakers.	Can perform as effectively as an educated native speaker in all listening activities he encounters and has a native speaker's flexibility in new ones.	

GENERAL DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC TASKS	COMMENT
W-5 Native-like Proficiency Written proficiency equivalent to that of a native speaker. His written language in all its forms is fully accepted by educated native speakers in all its features including word choice, structural variation, style, colloquialisms, cultural references, subtlety of meaning, textual structuring, thought sequence, coherence and formal accuracy.	Can perform as effectively as a native speaker in all writing tasks he normally encounters and has native-like flexibility in mastering new ones.	
R-5 Native-like Proficiency Reading proficiency equivalent to that of an educated native speaker. Can read difficult and abstract prose, as well as highly colloquial writings and the classic literary forms of the language. With varying degrees of difficulty can read all normal kinds of handwritten documents. Can appreciate humour and even heavily culture-dependent nuances of meaning or style.	Can comprehend with as much ease as an educated native speaker all forms of the written language he normally encounters.	